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3 August 1967

## EAST EUROPEAN MEDIA ON RUMANIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION

### - A Case Study in Selective Coverage -

The session of the Grand National Assembly which took place last week in Bucharest was certainly a disappointment to those journalists who had been led to expect some dramatic new initiatives in Rumanian foreign policy. Still, though unspectacular, this session was of particular interest as probably the most detailed expose yet of the whole spectrum of Bucharest's views on international issues and questions of world Communism.<sup>1</sup> It was, for one thing, a summation of the numerous areas where Rumania has been at odds with various other Communist countries and Parties. At the same time, however, it has been observed that, especially in Ceausescu's "key-note" address, a considerably warmer tone was struck toward the Soviet Union and generally toward Rumania's obligations as a loyal member of the "socialist camp" than has been usual from Bucharest for some time.

What picture of the Grand National Assembly session has been given the peoples of Eastern Europe by the media of their countries? On the whole, a highly selective one, with particular stress on those aspects of the Ceausescu speech which sought to confirm Rumania's good "socialist credentials". Some kind of selectivity in handling the Rumanian meeting was probably inevitable, given the flood of material which issued forth from the Palace of Congresses in Bucharest (Ceausescu's speech alone lasted 2½ hours), and it was no difficult task to divide the material into those parts which stressed the various facets of national independence and sovereignty and Party autonomy and those which contained pledges of allegiance to the

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1) See EERA/Rumanian Unit Background Paper "Rumania's Foreign Policy 'Debate' -- An Assertion of Emancipation but no Political Sensations" of 27 July 1967 for an analysis of the session.

Communist world. East European coverage has been limited almost entirely to the latter and thus given a wholly distorted picture. There has, moreover, been hardly any mention of the other speeches which spelled out the Rumanian position more explicitly than Ceausescu himself had done (Paul Niculescu-Mizil on the inevitability of differences between Parties, Emil Bodnaras on Bucharest's objections to the draft non-proliferation treaty, Ion Gheorge Maurer on the theme of foreign interference, and so on).

Though this has been the general pattern, there have also been some interesting nuances; at one end of the scale, the GDR and Albania have confined themselves only to reporting the bare fact that the session had been held, without giving any substantive details whatever, while at the other end, Hungary and Czechoslovakia cautiously touched on one or two of the controversial issues, and Yugoslav media stressed the theme of independent foreign policy.

Such terse or one-sided and tendentious reporting of Rumanian activity and declarations is in itself nothing new, but in view of the breadth with which Bucharest's foreign policy was spelled out at the Grand National Assembly meeting, it would be instructive to register it in more detail here. The sections below give a country-by-country analysis of the East European coverage.

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#### ALBANIA

In conformity with its usual procedure of marking Rumanian political events according to proper protocol, i.e., by factual reporting on political events in this "socialist" country, Radio Tirana broadcast on 26 July a nine-line news item on the Rumanian parliamentary meeting. Radio Tirana stated in its late evening newscast:

A session of the Rumanian Grand National Assembly was held between 24 and 26 July. In addition to adopting a number of laws, the session also heard the report on the party and government's policy on current international problems, given by General Secretary of the Rumanian Communist Party Central Committee, Nicolae Ceausescu. Many deputies expressed their views on the report. Following discussions, the Grand National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Rumania approved the report read by Nicolae Ceausescu.

The short space given by the Albanian news media to the Rumanian event may appear to be overly formal. Yet, with the exception of the well-known biased reaction to Chinese events, the Albanian press has been failing to take note of the normal political developments in the other East European Communist countries. Therefore, the Tirana treatment of the Rumanian parliamentary session can be considered to be in line with the claimed existence of normal and friendly relations between these two countries.

The state of relations between Bucharest and Tirana was defined by Albanian Foreign Minister Nesti Nase in his foreign policy report to the Albanian National Assembly on 18 July as follows:

The Government of the Albanian People's Republic will develop friendly relations with the Socialist Republic of Rumania.

As can be seen, Nase's reference to Rumanian-Albanian relations is brief and to the point -- and so was Albania's reaction to the recent Rumanian Grand National Assembly meeting, i.e., curt, formal and to the point. This attitude reflects the character of relations between two socialist countries which hold different political-ideological views on many issues, but at the same time find it convenient to maintain friendly relations, no matter how conventional.

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#### BULGARIA

The Bulgarian daily press of July 25 carried a brief TASS report from Bucharest which said only that the session of the Rumanian Grand National Assembly had been opened, that according to Agerpres, the international activity of Rumania and the basic problems of the country's foreign policy would be at the center of the session, and that Ceausescu had read a report on the political line of the Party and government on topical international questions. The same brief report was also broadcast by Radio Sofia on July 24.

The daily press of July 26 carried brief summaries of Ceausescu's report, presented in the form of BTA dispatches from Bucharest which refer to the report as published by Agerpres. The summaries in all papers concentrated on quoting the following points of the report:

- The central element in Rumanian foreign policy is the friendship with all socialist countries.

- The CC of the RCP and the government constantly devote attention to the expansion of relations between Rumania and the USSR.



- Rumania develops economic, political and scientific-cultural relations with all socialist countries.

- Ceausescu speaks of the relations with each of the socialist countries, listed by name in the following order: Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the GDR, Albania, the Chinese People's Republic, the DRV, the Korean PDR, the Mongolian People's Republic, and Cuba.

- Rumania pays attention to the development of economic collaboration with all socialist countries; Comecon plays a positive role in this connection.

- As a member of the Warsaw Pact, Rumania is doing everything possible to strengthen her power of defense.

In addition to the above points, some papers (Otechestven Front, Narodna Armia and Trud) also mentioned the statement that Rumania would actively work for the development of relations with all countries, regardless of their social order, but without quoting the statement about "the unprecedented scope of Rumania's international relations" which illustrates "the correctness of her foreign policy".

Narodna Armia and Otechestven Front also mentioned that Ceausescu spoke of the relations of the RCP with other Communist and workers' Parties, but did not give any details. No reference was made to the statements about the need "to extend the practice of consultations" among the socialist countries, or the possibility that "differences may appear" among them.

The relatively most extensive summary was given by the Party daily Rabotnichesko Delo, which, however, did not mention the two above-mentioned points on development of relations with all countries regardless of their social order and on inter-Party relations. Instead, Rabotnichesko Delo quoted Ceausescu's words on the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution.

The Party daily also gave a direct quotation regarding the Middle East conflict, about the importance of a withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the occupied territories. The quotation ends there, however, without mentioning Ceausescu's words, addressed to the Arab countries, that "we do not share the attitude of those circles who are for the liquidation of the state of Israel".

Bulgarian coverage of the session thus far (the daily press up to July 29 and the Radio up to July 31) corresponded, on the whole, to the coverage by Soviet information media. It ended with the above information on Ceausescu's report. The speeches by Maurer and others during the session were not mentioned at all.

(Bulgarian Unit)

### CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The session of the Rumanian Grand National Assembly was covered by Czechoslovak media strictly on the news level. There were no commentaries either on the radio or in the daily press.

Czechoslovak radio stations broadcast on three consecutive days (July 24-26) altogether 116 lines, i.e., eight to nine minutes, in nine news items. The first broadcast at 1100 hrs., July 24, provided a brief preview of the agenda. The next, at 1600 hrs. stated that the high hopes of Western correspondents who had speculated that the session would yield "surprising decisions" had been dashed. The subsequent items of that day summarized briefly Ceausescu's speech, stating that the Rumanian leader had expressed himself "positively both about the cooperation with the Warsaw Pact countries, as well as within Comecon." About the situation in the Middle East, Ceausescu was quoted as having said that "Rumania shows solidarity with the struggle of the Arab countries, but it cannot agree with the statements of some Arab powers which demand the liquidation of Israel." At 2100 hrs. of July 24 the newscast added that Ceausescu had also "expressed solidarity with the Vietnamese people." An hour later it was said that the Party leader had assessed the role of small states in the contemporary world and stressed that the concept that the fate of the world rested in the hands of big powers no longer corresponded to our times. Radio Bratislava at 1900 hrs. quoted Ceausescu as having said that the most urgent present tasks were measures "which would force Israel to leave the occupied territories and start negotiations on a peaceful solution of the problems at issue." The speaker had said the Rumanian delegation did not sign the Moscow declaration on the Middle East because it contained some attitudes which were not in agreement with Rumanian policy.

On July 25 the debate in the National Assembly was covered in two newscasts. Mentioned were the contributions by Stoica, Niculescu-Mizil and Apostol. At 2300 hrs., and in the first newscast of July 26 it was announced that the Grand National Assembly had unanimously approved Ceausescu's report on foreign policy and the tasks facing the government.

Rude Pravo and Pravda (July 25) printed substantially identical versions of a Ceteka release, containing some 250 words. It included the points reported in the radio newscasts. Rude Pravo ran the release on p. 7, Pravda on p. 1. Neither CP paper printed any comment of its own. Rude Pravo of July 26 published, again on p. 7, a brief release of about 80 words reporting the unanimous approval, after discussion, of Ceausescu's report. In his final words, the Rumanian CP leader reportedly stressed: "We assure our friends in all socialist countries, all progressive people in all countries of the world, that they have in the Rumanian Socialist Republic a reliable ally in the struggle for progress and peace all over the world."

The treatment of the session was rather routine. The Czechoslovak media were underlining those points which fitted in with CS policy. Played down or suppressed were items in which Rumanian policy differs from that of other Warsaw Pact states, e.g. the call for the abolition of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Evidently because Ceausescu's speech was of a double-edged propaganda value, CS media have thus far refrained from comment.

(Hajek and Niznansky)

GDR

The first East German mention in the press as well as in radio media was featured by Neues Deutschland, 28 July (page 7), consisting of a twenty line news story which stated that "the National Assembly...met at the beginning of this week." The rest of the dispatch merely enumerated the speakers, concluding with the sentence that Ceausescu and Maurer "explained the positions of the Party and of the government on foreign policy questions".

There was no further mention of the Rumanian event during the subsequent three days (the paper of August 1 is not yet available here), and there is not likely to be any more explicit story, far less commentary.

East Germany's news blackout is perhaps a simpler way to handle the delicate (for the GDR) situation than the selective and biased reporting done by the Soviets. After the overt outburst of differences of opinions between Rumania and East Germany following the Rumanian-West German exchange of diplomatic relations during the first days of February, GDR media have been very quiet on Rumania and Rumanian events. One could almost maintain that in East German eyes, Rumania has become an "un-country". Clearly, the regime is unable to report factually on Ceausescu's speech and his reassertion of national independence, being too embarrassed to do so; on the other hand, the SED seems at present reluctant to repeat an open attack, or even covert criticism.

Dorothy Miller



# HUNGARY

Hungarian communications media covered in some detail only the report delivered by Ceausescu on Rumanian foreign policy on July 24. On this topic, both the domestic service of Radio Budapest broadcast on July 24 and the three principal daily papers of Budapest gave in their July 25 issues essentially the same version, with the exception of minor, irrelevant digressions from that common pattern. Thus, Nepszabadsag mentioned that, contrary to habit, the Grand Assembly had met in the Palace of the Republic instead of in the building of Parliament. Moreover, Magyar Nemzet and Nepszava led off their report on Ceausescu's speech by quoting him as saying that the "world forces of Socialism have continued to develop and have registered new successes on the road of economic and social progress." Otherwise, both Radio Budapest and the three main Budapest daily papers supply the same details, in the same order and depth. The underlying idea of the coverage seems to have been to pick out, in the first place, those points of the Ceausescu speech which are in agreement with the Hungarian party line, while at the same time also taking care not to conceal from Hungarian public opinion some important points on which Rumania happens to follow a separate course.

After quoting Ceausescu's statement on the responsibility of every state, every nation, be it big or small, for the fate of peace, the Hungarian communications media under review dealt with the Rumanian leader's references to inter-bloc affairs. "The (Rumanian) Party's Central Committee and the Government are paying permanent attention to the development of direct contacts with the Party and state leadership of all Socialist countries." Next came the statement on Soviet-Rumanian relations: "the relations of friendship, solidarity and fraternal collaboration between our country and the Soviet Union" have "old traditions and deep historical roots"... From this statement, Hungarian coverage jumped to Ceausescu's remark on Rumanian-Chinese relations: "the ties of fraternal collaboration between Rumania and the Chinese People's Republic are undergoing a continuous development."

Then followed Ceausescu's "positive" stand on Comecon. "The Council for Mutual Aid plays a positive role in widening economic relations among member countries." Subsequently, the Hungarian coverage mentioned Ceausescu's remark on the Warsaw Pact: "As a member of the Warsaw Treaty and as a Socialist country, Rumania is doing everything in its power to strengthen its defense capacity."

The following part of the Hungarian version touched on Ceausescu's statements on Rumanian relations with some Western countries. While those with France, Great Britain and the West German republic were handled in a summary fashion, saying that they were developing "favorably", a little more was given on Rumanian-US relations.

There had been some progress of late, but further development of relations was "rendered difficult" by America's "discriminatory practices" and the "war carried on against the people of Vietnam". The Hungarian version of the Ceausescu speech next quoted his appeal to the socialist countries to unite in order to help Vietnam. "The paramount importance of the Vietnamese issue was pointed out by the following quotation: "The cessation of the Vietnam war is the central problem of international life."

The Hungarian version of Ceausescu's speech dealt with two further points: Rumania's stand on the Middle East crisis and on European detente. Ceausescu was quoted as saying that "at present the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied territories to the line which existed before the start of the hostilities is of the utmost importance and urgency." The Hungarian version turns subsequently to Ceausescu's explanation of why the Rumanians refused to sign the declaration issued after the 9 June 1967 Moscow conference of Socialist countries: "Because the declaration of the conference included points of view which did not correspond with the position of our Party and Government, our delegation did not sign that declaration."

As to European detente, the Hungarian communications media under review quoted Ceausescu's suggestion regarding the withdrawal of foreign troops from Europe as follows: "A particularly positive factor would undoubtedly be the departure of all non-European forces from Europe, the withdrawal of all forces from the territory of other states to within their national boundaries, the abolition of foreign military bases and the liquidation of military blocs."

Only the July 26 and 27 issues of Nepszava carried very short items of news on the rest of the recent session of the Rumanian Parliament. Thus, on July 26 the paper announced in an item of a few lines that the Rumanian Parliament had wound up its foreign policy debate and approved Ceausescu's report. On July 27, Nepszava listed the laws (with no comment) passed by the Rumanian Parliament in its recent session.

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### POLAND

The July 24-25 session of the Rumanian Grand National Assembly was covered by Polish official media in a most restrained way and, one can say, rather tendentiously, with a number of omissions of points which may seem unpalatable to the Polish regime and with emphasis on certain cliché statements.

As a matter of fact, the only subject covered by the press was the speech of Nicolae Ceausescu, the beginning and ending of the session being only briefly reported by Radio Warsaw. Ceausescu's speech was covered by Radio Warsaw on July 24 in about 350 words and by the daily press in about 600 words on July 25. Press coverage was limited to the reprinting of a PAP dispatch from Bucharest dated July 24. Thus far no comment on either Ceausescu's speech or the session has appeared.

#### Radio Warsaw

In a brief summary of the Rumanian leader's speech, Radio Warsaw quoted him as saying that smaller and medium-sized states have increased their active participation in solving international problems. These facts show that world problems cannot be solved by big powers alone.

American imperialism is the chief force inspiring and organizing the policy of aggression and interference in the internal affairs of other countries. The war in Vietnam pointedly shows that in our times one cannot defeat a nation which persistently defends its liberty. Rumania feels that it is indispensable for the "socialist" states to unite their efforts to help the Vietnamese nation.

Regarding the Middle East, Ceausescu was quoted as stating that -- "according to Rumania" -- the only just way to settle the conflict is the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Arab territories and "the taking up of discussion with the participation of the interested parties."

Rumania is for the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, for the stoppage of their production and for a total liquidation of atomic weapons stockpiles.

The central element of the Rumanian foreign policy is friendship and alliance with all "socialist" countries. Rumania attaches particular importance to the economic cooperation with these countries.

The development of the military power of each "socialist" country and of the whole "socialist" system is of paramount importance for the defense of the achievements of our nation. Rumania,

as a member country of the Warsaw Pact and as a "socialist" state is doing its best to increase its defense capacity.

Regarding European security, Ceausescu was quoted as recommending the withdrawal from the continent of non-European troops, the withdrawal "of all foreign troops from the territories of other countries", and the liquidation of military bases and military blocs. A sober approach to the problem of European security would be to take as a point of departure the reality created after World War II: first of all, the fact of the existence of two German states and the preservation of the inviolability of the borders established after the war, among these the border on the Oder and Neisse Rivers.

#### The Press (PAP)

The PAP coverage did not differ in content from the broadcast of Radio Warsaw. The difference was only in extent and in emphasis. Two points were clearly emphasized: the passage on Vietnam, and that on Rumania's friendship and alliance with all "socialist" countries.

#### Omissions

Of particular interest are the passages in Ceausescu's speech which were omitted from the summaries by Polish media. One such passage dealt with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bucharest and Bonn. Ceausescu had said the following on the German question:

As is known, proceeding from the reality of the existence of the two German states, from the consistent policy of our country in strengthening European security, and from the interest of peace and security of the peoples, this year Rumania has established diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany. The economic and cultural collaboration between Rumania and the Federal Republic of Germany has experienced a strong development.

The rational and effective tackling of European security problems presupposes that it is based on the historic realities which resulted from World War II and, in the first place, on the existence of two German states -- the GDR and the German Federal Republic.....the logical conclusion is to establish normal relations with both German states.... The achievement of European security (implies) respect for the inviolability of the borders established in Europe after the war and, implicitly, of the Oder-Neisse border.

Radio Warsaw summarized these remarks as follows:

A rational approach to the problem of European security demands to take as a departing point the reality which came into existence after World War II; first of all the fact of the existence of two German states and the preservation of the inviolability of the borders established after the war, among them, the border on the Oder and Neisse Rivers.

Among other more important passages of Ceausescu's speech that were not covered by Polish media were those dealing with:

- national independence and sovereignty;
- inter-Party and inter-state relations, particularly Ceausescu's recommendations for discussions, from Party to Party and state to state, on divergencies;
- the criticism of the Arabs for failing to recognize the existence of the state of Israel; Ceausescu's statement of the reasons for Rumania's refusal to sign the Moscow declaration on the Middle East;
- Ceausescu's clear implication that one of the big powers which must renounce atomic weapons is the USSR.

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#### SOVIET UNION

Soviet treatment of the Rumanian National Assembly session, particularly of Ceausescu's speech, was brief, but too carefully selective to be called perfunctory. On July 25 Pravda, on an inside page, and Izvestiia, on its front page, carried very brief news items merely observing that the session had opened and was discussing Ceausescu's report on foreign policy.

The only substantive coverage of proceedings was provided on July 27. TASS carried a carefully worded dispatch (dated July 26) of about 700 words limited almost exclusively to the Ceausescu speech. It concentrated either on passages of neutral political content, such as the socialist camp's "growing influence on international life," or on Ceausescu's favorable references to the USSR, the Warsaw Pact, and themes connoting solidarity, the latter being



sufficiently shortened to represent a distortion beyond the cordiality contained in the original speech. TASS stated,

In the report considerable space was devoted to the Rumanian Socialist Republic's [TASS in English says "Peoples' Republic"] links with the socialist countries. N. Ceausescu dwelt on Rumania's relations with the Soviet Union, noting the all-round cooperation between the two countries. He stressed the importance of the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the Soviet people's contribution to the defeat of Hitlerite fascism.

Also,

The speaker spoke about the fact that Rumania as a member of the Warsaw Treaty, as a socialist country, does everything possible to strengthen its defense capability, so as to be ready, together with other socialist countries, to repulse any aggressor.

TASS noted Ceausescu's support of peaceful coexistence, European security based upon the inviolability of frontiers, the 1966 Bucharest Declaration, and unity within the Communist movement. It cited Rumania's intention to strengthen relations with all countries regardless of social system and to extend "Rumanian political, economic, cultural, and scientific-technological links with France, Italy, Britain, the German Federal Republic [and] Austria..."

Regarding Rumania's relations with assorted socialist countries, TASS ventured a transparent distortion:

The report dealt at length with the development of cooperation with Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the GDR, DRV, DPRK, MPR, and Cuba and also with the CPR and Albania. In this connection it noted that in the course of the complex process of social development, some differences of opinion may arise, differences in judgment on some questions of relations between socialist countries, the world revolutionary process, and international life.

This wording implied that Ceausescu saw his main "differences" with respect to the last two countries of the foregoing list, China and Albania.

On the sensitive issues of the Middle East and the nonproliferation treaty, TASS merely stated that Rumania's "well-known views" were set forth.

This TASS dispatch was carried on July 27 by Pravda and Izvestiia. (The only regional paper consulted, Sovetskaya Moldavia, made no reference to the National Assembly session at all.)

Apart from the TASS story, the only coverage observed came in a Radio Moscow domestic broadcast of the same day. While it was somewhat longer than the TASS story, it followed TASS in stressing "favorable" elements and ignored such controversial elements as China, NPT, and the Middle East.

Soviet media thus sought, first, to play the Grand National Assembly session down as much as possible without ignoring it entirely, and, second, to present as tranquil an image of Soviet-Rumanian relations to their recipients as possible.

Fritz Ermarth

#### YUGOSLAVIA

The Yugoslav reaction to the speech made by Nicolae Ceausescu on July 24 before the Grand National Assembly in Bucharest, concentrated on three points: (Politika and Borba, Belgrade, 25 July 1967)

1. Rumania's independent foreign policy has been emphasized, especially Ceausescu's views on the Middle East crisis. Yugoslav information media concealed neither the fact that the Rumanians did not want to sign the Moscow June 9 Declaration condemning the "Israeli aggression," nor that the Rumanians were not present at all at the July 11-12 Communist Party meeting in Budapest.

2. Ceausescu's friendly words addressed to Yugoslavia were given special attention. In this connection, the Iron Gate project was extolled as a symbol of Yugoslav-Rumanian friendship.

3. Rumania's positive role in the Balkans was also given special attention.

The following paragraph from a Tanjug report from Bucharest was broadcast by Radio Belgrade: "It is considered that by the act of approving Ceausescu's report, that phase of independent foreign policy, which started with the April 1964 Declaration concerning the Rumanian Workers' Party's attitude toward the problem of the international Communist and workers movement, has been brought to a successful end." (Radio Belgrade, 26 July 1967, 2200 hrs.)

Slobodan Stankovic